



EmployeeUPDATE

Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.

A month publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Studies, training aim to improve nursing home care

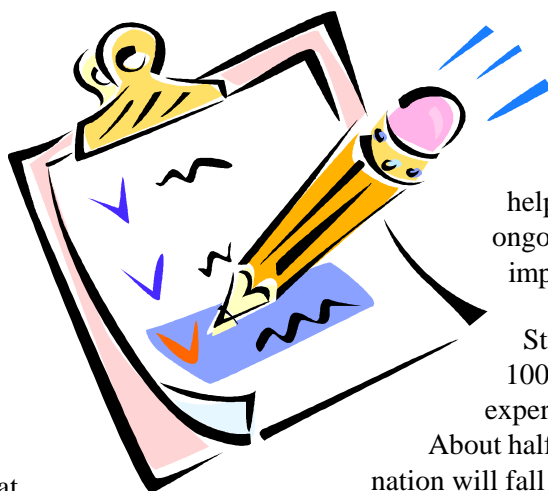
Improvement in the care of patients in North Carolina nursing homes is the goal of studies and training being conducted for the Division of Facility Services.

The effort zeroes in on participating nursing homes to examine safety and patient care in two areas: cognitive impairment, and minimizing falls and fall-related accidents. Recommendations arising from the studies conducted by Medical Review North Carolina are expected to result in improvements in both patient care areas.

"This project helps the facility identify and develop quality improvement programs to better manage residents in nursing homes that have a history of falling or wandering," said Cindy DePorter, branch manager of Quality Evaluative Systems in the Licensure and Certification Section.

DePorter said nursing homes volunteer to participate in sessions in which they hear from technical experts about falls, and discuss why patients fall, delving to the root cause, such as a patient whose call bell for bathroom assistance goes unanswered, or someone whose medication may make them unsteady.

"The project works with the facility to educate them on falls," she said. "This helps the facility to develop a quality improvement program tailored to the facility and its unique needs. The project also gives the facility basic tools to help monitor and track the falls."



In addition, there is monthly contact with the facility, an electronic bulletin board and regular conference calls to discuss their more difficult cases. This system helps the facility to feel that they have ongoing support as the program is implemented.

Studies show that it is not unusual in a 100-bed nursing home for patients to experience falls 100 to 200 times a year.

About half of all nursing home residents in the nation will fall at least once a year. Of those, up to a fifth will cause serious injury, including fractures affecting the hip, spine or forearm. Of all fall-related fractures, hip fractures are the most serious and lead to the greatest health problems and sometimes death.

Wandering in nursing homes also is not unusual. About 65 percent of nursing home residents have behavioral problems and wandering is one of the most common problems among residents with cognitive impairment. It poses a risk to the wandering residents and additional challenges to caregivers and other residents.

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Secretary's Letter

Complaints measure how well we do our jobs

Dear DHHS Employee,

We've done a great deal to improve customer service here at DHHS. The latest challenge is improving our response to customer complaints. I'm sure most of you have received complaints as part of your job. Our goal is to figure out how to resolve these complaints in the best possible way for both the complainant and the department.

Our customer service task force is addressing that issue. Recently, I had the opportunity to hear a presentation on this subject. One item that I found particularly interesting was the issue of soliciting complaints. At first this sounds counter-productive. Why ask people to comment? We are all busy. Why add to that workload?

But, the fact is that complaints are a primary measure of how we are doing our jobs. They may expose issues or problems that we have never thought about. We need to view complaints not as personal assaults but as feedback that can help us improve our services.

We are talking about a cultural change – increasing the visibility of complaints. That way we can analyze what we are hearing and use it to make sure that we getting it right. All of us need to look at this as a positive.



Soon we will be going live with a new customer service web site that will give our customers the opportunity to comment on their services. This web site will give us a formal way to capture, analyze and learn from complaints.

As we move forward with this process, please look at this in terms of improvement. This is not a way to attack employees. Even critical feedback can be positive if it is aimed at fixing a process that isn't working. Ultimately, it will make your job easier because we will learn from complaints and address issues that are making your job tougher.

In the coming months, we will highlight our efforts at complaint resolution in this newsletter. Please watch for these exciting changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Carmen Hooker Odom".

Carmen Hooker Odom



Jalil Isa
¡Salud y Saludos!

Festival screenings raise awareness

If you found yourself near downtown during the daytime on the first weekend in February, you may have noted plenty of action taking place around the Raleigh Convention Center. This was not a result of any controversy surrounding the issue of whether a new Convention Center should be built.

Instead, those attending the 2nd Annual NBC17 Health and Fitness Festival were more concerned with building a more solid foundation in their well-being. The event drew people from as far away as the Triangle media's signals reach. The end result: more than 32,000 participants; dozens of booths and exhibitors; and an opportunity to get a variety of free medical screenings.

NBC17 partnered with La Conexión, a local Spanish-language newspaper, and La Ley, a Hispanic radio station, to get the word out to the Hispanic population about this event. In the process, NBC17 also got the word out to a population that can benefit from the important lessons of preemptive care. That is, seeking medical counseling...even if you don't feel sick.

But something else struck those in the health industry. Latinos were using this event almost as a substitute for an actual doctor's visit. Well, perhaps 'substitute' is not the right word, since many of these individuals would likely go without *any* medical attention under their current circumstances. Yet, this event offered them a chance to get certain basic check-ups that they might have otherwise not received any time soon. Some of these check-ups included: free screenings for vision, hearing, blood pressure, bone density, body fat and nutrition. Attendees were also able to pre-register to receive free diabetes and cholesterol check-ups.

Some of the big pharmaceutical companies were on hand providing some of these tests. I overheard some of the company representatives commenting on the incredible success of their screenings. They were measuring this strictly based on the number of people waiting in lines for their turn to gain some insight into their health. A large number of these individuals were Latinos, who saw this as a chance – perhaps for the only time during the entire year – to hear what their blood/sugar level was at. While some of these tests may have been done under conditions far from perfect (considering one must fast for optimal accuracy prior to some of these tests), they still provided much needed information.

As far as I can see, this is helping Latinos by providing useful information. But perhaps more importantly, the Health and Fitness Festival is also contributing to a change in attitude about health. It is helping participants gain further understanding of the idea of preventive medicine, something that as I said in a recent column is often missing from the Hispanic recipe for good health. However, it is still troublesome that Latinos feel they must attend a health fair to come as close as they will to a general medical check-up. Hopefully, as more opportunities for health insurance continue flourishing, more and more Latinos will do their part to not only sign up for this coverage, but also take advantage of the benefits of wellness check-ups. ■

Jalil

Division of Aging and Adult Services

Name reflects broader mission for division

The Division of Aging has changed its name to the Division of Aging and Adult Services. This follows a decision announced in September 2003 to transfer the Adult Services Section of the Division of Social Services to the Division of Aging.

Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom said that she believes the change will strengthen the state's capacity to respond to the needs and interests of older adults and younger adults with disabilities. Secretary Hooker Odom said that she is already seeing improved coordination in such areas as policy development, program support, communications and fiscal management. She also emphasized that the move has not disrupted local programs serving older and disabled adults.

Division Director Karen Gottovi sees this as a pivotal time for North Carolina's service to older and disabled adults and their families. "We must meet the challenges of our aging society by drawing upon the talents and resources of active seniors, enhancing services for our vulnerable citizens, valuing diversity while addressing disparity among our population, being responsible stewards of resources, and helping individuals, families and communities prepare for the future," Gottovi said.

Among the groups endorsing the organizational and name change are the N.C. Governor's Advisory Council on Aging, the N.C. Association of County Directors of

Social Services, the N.C. Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and the N.C. Coalition on Aging. North Carolina is now among at least 15 states that have integrated the administration of aging and adult services.

The addition of adult services further strengthens a state division that has a long and solid history of quality programs. Established by state law in 1977, the division is responsible for administering home and community care programs under the federal Older Americans Act that support older adults and their family caregivers. It also promotes local senior centers and manages the state's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program for residents of nursing homes and adult care homes.

The Division's Adult Services Section has responsibility for overseeing social services programs for older and disabled adults and their families as provided by the state's 100 county departments of social services. These programs provide older and disabled adults the services, supports and benefits they need to remain safely in their homes and communities. These programs include adult protective services, guardianship, case management, and financial assistance for low-income persons who reside in adult care homes or who would otherwise require such care if not for the State-County Special Assistance In-Home Option.

Nursing Home, continued from page 1

These studies will not only help to improve the quality of care given to nursing home patients, but will also help in tracking quality improvement measures in nursing homes. Improvements are mapped by a series of reports and data analysis self-reported by facilities to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Assistance. The emphasis is on improving the quality of nursing homes and creating objective data for families when they evaluate where to place a loved one.

The DFS studies complement a broader effort by CMS to improve care in nursing homes in the areas of pain

management and restraint reduction. The Division of Facility Services elected to study cognitive impairment and falls because it is a vital area the CMS study was not researching, and because these two areas fell under the top 10 deficiencies cited in North Carolina.

The ultimate goal of these initiatives is for facilities to implement changes in their systems of care that result in sustainable improvements in the quality of life and care of the residents.

Contributed by Eliza Drury

"Slight Departure" delivers music to Riddle Center patients

A group of four employees at the J. Iverson Riddle Center are doing more than just helping patients, they are making music.

The part-time musicians have come together and formed a contemporary acoustic folk band, "Slight Departure."

"We are fortunate to work where advocating music is considered a big plus," said Alan Darveaux, who plays Appalachian dulcimer in the band.

The band often plays at Riddle Center Christmas observances, dances, parties and other events. Some of the band members also play separately on their own time for the patients. The band also plays at local venues and at Alta Pass Orchard along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

"We are pleased to respond to requests to play, and pleased to be given the opportunity to do so," said Darveaux, a teacher in the center's vocational department.

Others in the band are Sherrill Kever, six-string guitar, who works in the Creative Therapy Department; Jeff Haslam, mandolin, who works in the Family Infant

Preschool Program; and Jim Clark, stand-up bass, a psychologist.



Left to right: Jeff Haslam, Sherrill Kever, Alan Darveaux, Jim Clark,

The band has a recording of some of its music for sale, a CD entitled "Live in Carolina." The recording is available through the band's website, www.alandarveaux.com, and at the Riddle Center craft shop.

"Live in Carolina" is a recording of a concert that the band performed for the patients living at the Riddle Center. The patients are important to the band. The back side of the CD cover has a dedication to the

center's patients. The CD was sponsored in part by a grant from that N.C. Arts Council.

The band has recently scored some airtime. Their music has been broadcast on a local public radio station and on regional folk/bluegrass stations. Although Slight Departure is slowly becoming better known, they have not forgotten their roots. The band will be performing for the Riddle Center's dedication ceremony this spring. The Western Carolina Center was recently renamed in honor of Riddle, the center's director. ■

Contributed by Eliza Drury

Performance-based contracting spreads to 15 DHHS offices



Seven more DHHS divisions and offices have joined the performance-based contracting train, an effort that delivers a more cost-effective way for DHHS to do business. This brings to 15 the number of members of the management team that have switched to performance-based contracting.

At a Division Director's meeting in Raleigh in February, train cars were awarded by Assistant Secretary for Long-Term Care and Family Services Jackie Sheppard, above left, to: (left to right) Bob Fitzgerald, director, Division of Facility Services; George McCoy, director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Linda Harrington, director, Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of

Hearing; Kevin Ryan, chief, Women's and Children's Health Section; Lawrence Wilson, chief, Office of Economic Opportunity; Torlen Wade, director, Office of Research, Demonstrations and Rural Health; Barbara Pullen-Smith, executive director, Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities. The presentation was joined by David Womble, right, director, Office of Procurement and Contracting Services.

Performance-based contracting focuses on goals of the contract as opposed to the activities for achieving those goals. The department's management team goal is to convert all 4,000 DHHS contracts to performance-based by July 1, 2005. ■

Eating Well - ANYTIME!!



National Nutrition Month, sponsored each March by the American Dietetic Association, is a program that brings attention to the importance of making informed choices about food and exercise.

Obesity and overweight are serious health problems in North Carolina. According to a survey sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 35 percent of adults in North Carolina were overweight and 22 percent were obese. These weight conditions can significantly increase the risk of diabetes, certain types of cancer and heart disease.

Making healthful food choices is much easier than you thought possible. There's no need to follow a complicated diet, to count every calorie or to avoid your favorite foods. Even better, it's easy to eat healthfully anytime of day – anywhere you decide to eat.

Why make healthier food choices every day?

- 🕒 Enjoy great taste and good health in every bite you take.
- 🕒 Boost your brainpower for learning, working and playing.
- 🕒 Energize your body and mind for all the things you want to do.
- 🕒 Enhance your health from head to toe, on the inside and the outside.
- 🕒 Protect your whole body – heart, bones, muscles, eyes, skin and more!

What foods are the healthiest choices?

For high-energy health, choose minimally processed, whole foods. These are the best sources of the 70+ nutrients your body needs every day. Whole foods are cheaper than supplements and the nutrients in them are usually better absorbed.

Your best bets are:

- 🕒 Fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned and dried) ~ 5 to 9 servings a day
- 🕒 Whole grains (breads, cereals, rice, pasta and snacks) ~ 3 servings a day
- 🕒 Low-fat dairy foods (1% or less milk, yogurt and cheese) ~ 2 to 3 servings a day
- 🕒 Legumes and plant proteins (beans, peas, nuts and seeds) ~ 1 to 2 servings a day
- 🕒 Lean animal proteins (Meat, poultry, fish and eggs) ~ 2 to 3 servings a day

How can I make these foods part of my day?

With a few simple guidelines, you can enjoy power foods from morning 'til night. Look for tasty choices everywhere – at home, in restaurants and at the supermarket.

- 🕒 Eat early: Start every day with a protein, a whole grain and a piece of fruit.
- 🕒 Snack regularly: Include a protein for maximum satisfaction and lasting energy.
- 🕒 Select bright colors: Pick colorful fruits and vegetables to fill half your plate.
- 🕒 Go for lean: Choose lean meats and skinless poultry to minimize your saturated fat.
- 🕒 Choose crunchy: Go for grains, nuts, seeds and vegetables to pump up your fiber.

Adapted by the NC NET Program from Eat Right Montana materials

Bladen school health program receives recognition

State health directors presented the School Health Excellence Award to Bladen County School Superintendent Dr. Byron Lawson in recognition of his efforts to improve health education.

Presented at the State Health Director's Conference on Jan. 29, the award is based on the idea that improving the health of students is a shared responsibility between public health and public education.

Lawson was described as a superintendent who truly understands that healthy students learn better, and who should be a role model for all superintendents. The annual conference, an opportunity for local and state public health leaders to discuss local public health issues, focused on the increasing importance of school health as a public health priority.

Nominees for the excellence award were judged on four criteria: innovation, consistency, scope (addressing the

eight components of school health), and community connections.

Lawson has gone great lengths to make changes in the school system and focus on student's health. He changed local policy requiring students to get more physical activity each week. He implemented an Alternative to Suspension Tobacco Education program. He expanded the availability of school nurses and developed a partnership with Bladen Fitness Services to offer discount membership for school employees. He has supported healthy snacking for staff meetings and student activities and healthier menus in school cafeterias. Lawson played an integral role in the establishment of an HIV/STD awareness educational program for seventh-graders, and encouraged staff to receive training in dealing with emergency situations.

Contributed by Eliza Drury

Adoption Profile

Introducing Jamie...

Jamie is a beautiful, sweet and active little girl. She has wonderful manners and can be delightful to be around. She gets along very well with adults and children her age or younger. Jamie enjoys watching movies, going to the beach and playing with Barbies.

Jamie is an intelligent child with a great deal of potential when her behavior doesn't impede her schoolwork. She attends a special class at school where it's easier for her to stay focused and control her conduct.

She has chronic encephalopathy and cerebral palsy. Jamie has made great progress in her walking and is able to walk and run with forearm crutches, although she needs a wheelchair for long distances. She needs to learn to express her feelings in more appropriate ways.



Jamie
b. Feb. 8 1995

A Family for Jamie

Jamie requires a great deal more sleep than most children in order to keep her behavior reasonable. An adoptive family must realize that this is a major aspect to her emotional and physical well being. They will also need a great deal of energy and commitment to advocate for Jamie.

The adoptive family will need a large support network they can trust and be prepared to work through attachment training. Jamie needs to be the only or oldest child in the family. (NC #041-979)

For more information on this child or adoption in general, call NC Kids toll free at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 (1-877-625-4371).